



The Arlington Advocate

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60 PAGES 4 SECTIONS

Symmes Hospital in financial trouble

Officials: owners looking at a number of options

BY SUSAN DANSEYAR
STAFF WRITER

Admitting that they are concerned about financial problems at Symmes Hospital and Medical Center, health care officials said a decision will be made in the near future on the fate of the Arlington institution.

According to Lahey Clinic and HealthSouth officials — the owners of the hospital — that decision could be made within a month.

"The hospital has financial problems which Lahey and HealthSouth officials are very concerned about," said Pam Corradino, senior vice

president for critical services management at Lahey and a member of the executive committee of Symmes. "We have a lot of interests to protect, including the town's, and we're working on what our next step will be."

Despite rumors that the facility will be closing sometime between March and May, no such decision has been made, Corradino said.

The rumors may have started in the wake of media reports concerning the future of Boston Regional Medical Center, Corradino said. "I think that, more than anything, started a panic," she said.

All hospitals have been plagued by de-

creasing insurance reimbursement in the past few years, including Symmes, Corradino said. "Everyone has been paid less for what they do and that's very hard on a small organization such as Symmes," she said.

Symmes, a 111-bed general community hospital, is part of a partnership with its parent companies — the Burlington-based Lahey Clinic and Woburn-based HealthSouth Corporation. HealthSouth, the nation's largest provider of rehabilitative healthcare, manages Symmes Hospital's inpatient and outpatient rehabilitative programs. In 1991, former

■ SEE HOSPITAL, PAGE 6



STAFF PHOTO BY ANN RINGWOOD
The sign on Summer Street may be pointing to a fiscal emergency at Symmes Hospital and Medical Center.

CENTER FOR REFLECTION



Cappuccino is the reward for Claire Neely, left, and Abby Gordon, who walked from Porter Square to Starbucks Tuesday morning. As they share a laugh, Arlington Center is reflected in the window.

■ SEE CHOICE, PAGE 7

Minuteman board to phase out Choice

BY SUSAN DANSEYAR
STAFF WRITER

Members of the Minuteman Regional High School Committee unanimously agree on one thing — the state's formula for calculating School Choice funding has had an adverse effect on the school's revenue. In that state of general agreement, the committee voted Tuesday, 15-1, to phase out Choice over a period of several years. Jane Pagett, Lexington's representative to the committee, cast the only opposing vote. She favored getting rid of Choice immediately and voted, along with Arlington's representative Paul Schlichtman and Concord's representative Jack McCarthy, on an amended motion to eliminate all Choice students in October 1999. The amended motion failed, mainly because other School Committee members were uncomfortable giving up Choice tuitions until they learn how well the school's marketing effort for more students is going.

As a result of the vote, the last class of Choice students will be accepted to Minuteman in October 1999 and will not exceed 75 students.

Superintendent Ronald Fitzgerald will notify parents of the decision and said he hopes the news

What is rep's role?

The teachers' union rarely becomes involved in Minuteman Regional High School's political issues. But a union official recently made an exception to that practice because she said statements by some School Committee members are beginning to affect staff and students.

"Normally, we don't comment on the committee's budget deliberations, but the negative statements made by some committee members are becoming demoralizing to students and staff," said Carol Brunacci, president of the Minuteman Faculty Association. "When negativity begins trickling down and affecting the students' work, then things are serious."

Brunacci, who addressed the committee last week, suggested School Committee members who cannot support a position that has been voted by the majority strongly consider resigning.

"We are sick and tired of our good name being dragged through the mire created by School Committee members

■ SEE MINUTEMEN, PAGE 7

UPCOMING

Community Newspaper Co., publisher of the *Belmont Citizen-Herald*, will sponsor a public forum at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 25, at the Museum of Our National Heritage in Lexington. The subject of which will be special education, is part of a year-long exploration of education reform. The public is invited to attend.

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Judi of all Trades

Bohn coordinates school volunteers

BY LINDSEY BLAIVAS
STAFF WRITER

Incorporating issues of violence and racism into the classroom, supplying students with activities to boost their self esteem, and creating services that allow students to understand how they fit into the larger community are all part of what Judi Bohn does behind the scenes in the Arlington school system.

Bohn is the Arlington Partners in Education coordinator, but her fans among students and staff say the title does not do justice to the importance of Bohn's work.

"She's the igniter; she's always the one who starts the spark and gets things going," said Natalie Gill, president of the senior class at Arlington High.

Recently Bohn helped Gill in her pursuit to incorporate black history into the curriculum.

"Everyone told me she's the person to go to and before I knew it, she was talking to the head of the history department for me," said Gill.

Bohn does not just get the ball rolling. Administrators say she is also great at follow-through — at facilitating the process and ensuring that things happen.

"She has a 'can do' attitude," said Ottoson Junior High School Principal Paul Lamoureux. "She

engages quality people and gets quality results."

Bohn's involvement in the Arlington school system began more than 10 years ago when she began the Preschool PTA, a parent advocacy group that helped sponsor workshops to change and help influence early childhood development programs in the schools.

The group concentrated on the transition students and parents undergo from preschool to kindergarten.

"At the time, there was no outreach program to the parents or the children," Bohn said. "If you don't get parents involved early, then you run the risk of losing their enthusiasm and interest throughout their child's education."

Bohn was director of the program for six years. In 1996 she began volunteering as the coordinator for Partners in Education.

One of the first projects Bohn undertook was establishing an English as a Second Language program. She worked on developing a handbook of procedures that helped students whose first language was not English.

The program began as a resource for tutoring and has now branched out into many different areas. It now includes an International Club, specific tutoring for specific languages, programs to

■ SEE BOHN, PAGE 6



Judi Bohn, coordinator of Arlington Partners in Education, works out of her office at Arlington High School Tuesday morning.

Neighbors upset with parking lot

BY SUSAN DANSEYAR
STAFF WRITER

Helen Conroy of Freeman Street was awakened at 2 a.m. several times this month when snow plows came to clear her neighbor's driveway. Conroy's house is next door to 5-7 Freeman St., where the property owner has tarmacked the entire backyard and both sides of her house for a parking lot.

Town officials say the lot was put in without proper permits. The property owner is now requesting a variance in order to allow for seven parking spaces, a permit the Zoning Board of Appeals will consider at an upcoming meeting.

"I'm right next door, and I can see that there are at least seven or eight parking spaces, parking for both residential and commercial use," Conroy said. She said she is very concerned that as many as 10 cars will be able to fit in the lot, which she feels is not appropriate for a residential area.

The neighborhood has many children and she is concerned for their safety if there are so many cars driving in and out of the driveway next door, Conroy said. "The paving should not have been

■ SEE LOT, PAGE 10

CORRECTION

An article on Minuteman Regional High School in last week's edition incorrectly paraphrased former school committee representative Liz McNenny on two points. She urged the committee to seek "excellence in thinking." She did not say that she was speaking on behalf of citizens who oppose recently-passed legislation involving Minuteman Tech's budget.

MEETINGS

Feb. 4	Town Hall
Arlington Conservation Commission, 7:30 p.m., DPW Conference Room, Town Hall Annex	Millennium Celebration Committee, 7:30 p.m., Hearing Room, Town Hall
Thompson School Council, 3:30 p.m., Thompson School Library	Feb. 9 Arlington School Committee, 7:30 p.m., sixth floor, Arlington High School
Council on Aging, Finance Subcommittee, 3 p.m., Arlington Senior Center, 27 Maple St.	The Park and Recreation Commission, 7:30 p.m., Whittemore Robbins House
Feb. 6 Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee, 9:30 a.m., Whittemore Robbins House, located behind Robbins Library. Special planning session, new members welcome.	Feb. 10 Finance Committee, 7:30 p.m., O'Neil Room, Community Safety Building
Feb. 8 Board of Assessors, 7:30 p.m., Office of the Board of Assessors, Town Hall	Millennium Celebration Committee, 7:30 p.m., Hearing Room, Town Hall
Finance Committee, 7:30 p.m., O'Neil Room, Community Safety Building	Arlington Housing Authority, 6:30 p.m., John F. Cusack Room, Winslow Towers, 4 Winslow St.
Election Review Committee, 6 p.m., Selectmen's Hearing Room, Town Hall	Feb. 11 Health Insurance Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., first floor conference room, Town hall Annex
Board of Selectmen, 7:15 p.m., Board of Selectmen Room,	Arlington Fair Housing Committee, 7 p.m., first floor conference room, Town Hall Annex

TOWN ROUNDUP**Bicycle Advisory Committee meeting**

The Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee is hosting a public planning session on Saturday, February 6, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Whittemore-Robbins House in Arlington Center. The goal of the session is to recruit new committee members, review the committee's past accomplishments, receive community input, and begin planning for 1999 and beyond.

Anyone interesting in making Arlington a better place for bicycling is encouraged to get involved and attend the planning session on Saturday. (The Whittemore-Robbins House is the big yellow mansion located behind Robbins Library).

The Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee (ABAC) usually meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in Town Hall. The committee's next regular meeting is Monday, March 1, 7:30 p.m. For more information on the bike committee, you can call the town's Planning Dept. at 316-3090 or e-mail ABAC chair Jack Johnson at Jack2Bike@aol.com.

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STAFF PHOTO BY ELLEN BULLOCK

Organist Wendy Covell performs Louis Vierne's *Clair de Lune* during a recital marking the re-dedication of the E. & G.G. Hook pipe organ at the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church Sunday.

POLITICAL NEWS**Union resolution to go before selectmen**

Selectman Jack Hurd, will introduce a resolution at the selectmen's meeting on Feb. 8 on behalf of the Greater Boston Labor Council. The resolution speaks of the difficulty workers face in forming a union and calls on employers to follow the law and allow for democratic elections by workers.

The Greater Boston Labor Council is looking to build support from sympathetic local politicians in all of the cities and towns they cover. Arlington is home to several labor leaders and many union members, including Russell Bartash of Sheetmetal Workers Local #17 who is leading this effort in Arlington.

"Too often, employers simply flout the law when it comes to worker rights," said Bartash, a member of the mobilization committee.

Lyons kicks off his re-election campaign

On Tuesday night, a rain-soaked crowd of supporters met with Selectman Charlie Lyons to kick off his campaign for re-election.

Selectman Kevin Greeley and Susan Shaer were on hand to introduce Lyons and to help send his message that Arlington is a strong community that is working hard to plan for the future of the town and the needs of all of its residents.

Piandes enters race for School Committee

With today's deadline looming to pull nomination papers for the March 27 election, by Wednesday morning yet another resident had entered the school committee contest.

Town Meeting member George Piandes, of 39 Winter St., has entered the race for three seats, increasing the total number of nominees to six. Suzanne Baratta Owada, of 12 Bradley Road, recently announced that she would not return her papers.

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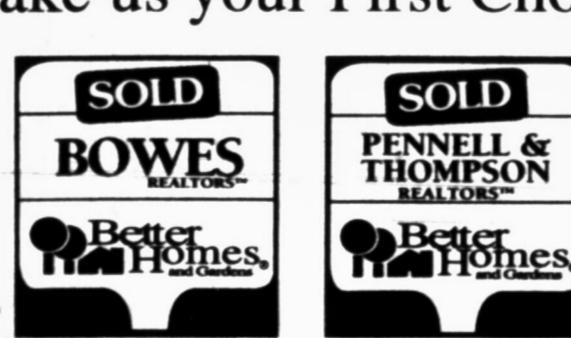
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"Vaughn is sensational, Brando with a sense of humor." - GQ

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Advocate wins first-place excellence award in New England competition

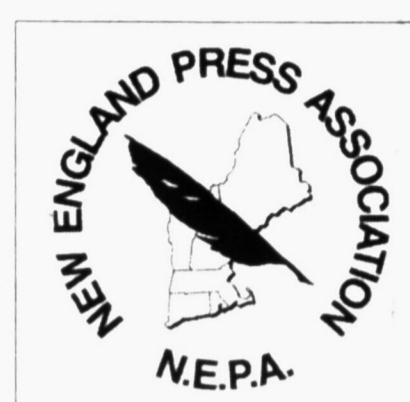
Judges for the New England Press Association's Better Newspaper Contest have picked The Arlington Advocate as the best newspaper in its circulation category.

In addition to the first place general excellence award received at the annual awards banquet Friday, The Advocate received a second place award for newspaper design and former staff writers Brian Boyd and Robin Robinson picked up second place honors for environmental reporting.

Judges in the general excellence category wrote that The Advocate "delivers depth, insight and timely reporting. This paper is full of nice surprises..." Judges in the design category called The Advocate "an excellent community newspaper" with a "good-looking front page."

Community Newspaper Company's Northwest newspaper group captured 22 other awards in the New England-wide journalism competition. Overall, CNC's publications garnered 173 awards in the contest that included entries from more than 250 weeklies and six daily newspapers throughout New England. Judging was done by members of the North Carolina Press Association.

Awards for the Northwest group — comprised of 18 weeklies — included Newspaper of the Year honors for the Beacon-Villager, which covers Maynard and Stow, as well as general excellence honors for The Beacon-Villager (2nd place in its circulation class); Lit-



tleton Independent (3rd place); Woburn Advocate (2nd place); and the Reading Advocate (3rd place).

Boyd and Robinson were honored for a three-part series that looked into the state of Arlington's environment, including ground and water contamination.

"Great in-depth service," the judges wrote. "Good perspectives."

Other newspapers honored during the annual NEPA awards ceremony included:

- Beacon-Villager, Maria Duncan, 2nd place for spot news writing;
- Littleton Independent, Greg Turner, 3rd place for spot news writing;
- Reading Advocate, 1st place, best editorial page;
- Bedford Minuteman, Mike Linskey, 3rd place for editorial page;
- The Beacon Villager, Maria Duncan, 1st place for general news story;
- Bedford Minuteman, Sean

Corcoran, 3rd place for general news story;

- Chelmsford Independent, Scott MacEachern and Robin Harned, honorable mention, general news story;

- Westford Eagle, Marc Vasconcellos, 2nd place for pictorial photography;

- Lexington Minuteman, 3rd place for best sports page;

- Chelmsford Independent, Kevin Redman, 1st place, best sports column;

- Tewksbury Advertiser, Doug Hastings, 2nd place, best sports column;

- Belmont Citizen-Herald, 3rd place, community service;

- Chelmsford Independent, Mike Cogliantini, 3rd place for photo series;

- Littleton Independent, 2nd place, lifestyle reporting;

- Westford Eagle, Robin Harned, honorable mention, reporting on religious issues;

- Woburn Advocate, Lawrence M. Walsh, 2nd place, reporting on religious issues;

- Chelmsford Independent, Christine Seymour, honorable mention, history reporting.

German to be sworn-in as judge

Arlington resident Marjory A. German, an attorney, has been nominated by Governor Cellucci and confirmed by the Governor's Council as Associate Justice of the Suffolk County Juvenile Court. The Governor will be administering the oath of office to Attorney German at the Arlington Town Hall on Feb. 11 at 4 p.m.

Marjory A. German

German has been the Attorney in Charge of the Roxbury Defenders with the Committee for Public Council Services for five years. Prior to that, she worked as a trial attorney with the Committee. She is a graduate of The University of Michigan Law School.

At her confirmation hearing, Supreme Judicial Court Justice Roderick Ireland cited German for dedicated work in the defense of indigent clients and emphasized her wisdom, compassion and integrity. Carol Gibson Smith, First Juvenile Justice of Plymouth

County talked of German's outstanding legal work within the Boston Juvenile Court and noted that the children of the Commonwealth will be well served by her appointment to the bench.

Marianne Cook of Michigan told the Council that through her years of association with German she had "never ceased to be amazed in the security of her moral convictions. She believes in the family, and its role to provide guidance to children." Cook went on to point out that German is "fierce in the need to protect children and to have them learn and practice the roles of responsibility." In a statement of advice to those who may come before her, Cook shared "...[German's] expectations for competence and professional integrity of those within her sphere of influence can be daunting. She is a great motivator of people. She expects no less of anyone than she would from herself."

German has been an active member of Park Avenue Church of Arlington, serving in the past as moderator, vice moderator and senior deacon. She continues her work on the youth group as well. German has two children, Jennifer, a third-year student at Harvard and Michael, a senior at Arlington High School. Lewis told the council of German's constant commitment to the children's "Pursuit of academic excellence." She remarked that if German "felt something wasn't quite right at school, she'd march herself into the school and talk to the teacher, and if necessary, the principal." German would also go into the school during Black History month and give presentations "to make sure the students had a more accurate picture of history."

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Unfinished Wood Bird House or Feeder \$5.00 ea. reg. \$5.88 	Unfinished				

FIRE LOG

The Fire Department responded to 81 calls during the period of Jan. 25 - 31. The calls included 17 investigations, 41 rescues, and five fires.

Jan. 26

At 1:08 p.m., a 59-year-old Burlington man stopped his car in front of the Community Safety Building on Mystic Street. He told authorities that he had been driving and felt light headed, so he pulled over because he has a history of heart problems. Firefighters responded and took his vitals while administrating oxygen. He was transported to Symmes Hospital and Medical Center.

At 4:36 p.m., firefighters responded the rear of 34 Robin Hood Road for a report of a man who was 100 yards out on semi-frozen Upper Mystic Lakes. The man was apparently wearing headphones and did not hear the firefighters calls to come back to shore. Worried that the ice was too thin, Firefighter Larry Marquis, put on a rescue suit and went out to retrieve the man. Marquis brought him safely back to shore.

Jan. 27

At 1:48 p.m., firefighters responded to Bates Road resident for a report of a burning smell. The resident said she smelled an odor of something burning coming from her dryer machine. Firefighters found a burned out fuse. The resident said she would have the fuse replaced.

At 6:30 p.m., firefighters responded to Brooks Avenue for a report of a resident who had fallen and cut her head. Firefighters controlled the bleeding and transported her to Symmes.

Jan. 28

At 1 a.m., firefighters responded to Webster Street for a broken water pipe in the basement. Firefighters called the Water Department to shut off the water. They cleaned up four inches of water from the floor.

At 1:30 p.m., firefighters responded to Gardner Street for a 10-month-old baby who had possibly swallowed a piece of glass. The mother said that a glass broke and she was unsure of whether the baby had swallowed any or not. Firefighters transferred the baby to Symmes.

Jan. 29

At 12:13 p.m., firefighters responded to 124 Park Ave. for a car accident. The driver of the car, a 22-year-old man, complained of back pain. The passenger, a 14-year-old girl, complained of neck and back pain. Both were transported to Symmes.

At 3:46 p.m., firefighters responded to the intersection of Park Avenue and Route 2 for an accident. One of the drivers, a 70-year-old man, complained of pain in his left hip and kidney area. He was transported to Symmes.

Jan. 28

At 6:16 p.m., firefighters responded to a three-car accident at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Wyman Street. Two drivers refused medical treatment and the third complained of back pain and was transported to Symmes.

Jan. 30

At 2:15 p.m., firefighters responded to Robbins Farm for a nine-year-old Medford boy who hurt his knee while sledding. The boy stated that he had banged into a rock. Firefighters applied ice to his knee and transported him to Winchester Hospital.

POLICE LOG**Jan. 28**

At 9:45 p.m., police arrested Carlos Diaz, 47, of 103 Lakeview St., Cambridge, and charged him with operating a motor vehicle after revocation of registration, operating after license suspension, and a straight warrant.

Jan. 30

At 6 p.m., police arrested Cristian Miranda, 18, of 6 Old Colony Road, and charged him with operating a motor vehicle without headlights and operating a motor vehicle without a license.

Police pulled over Miranda after observing him driving east on Massachusetts Avenue. A comput-

er check revealed that Miranda's license had expired. He was arrested and transported to the station.

Jan. 31

At 6 a.m., police arrested William Stathakis, 18, of 16 Swan St., and charged him with operating after having his license suspended.

'FAMILY' REUNION

The Conroy family of Arlington — Lisa and Paul, Robert, 9, and Timmy, 3 — were among the guests who visited with Dr. Vito Cardone, medical director of the Fertility Center of New England. The center, located in Reading, holds an annual holiday gathering for families that have been helped at the center.

NEWS NOTES**Y2K meeting Feb. 10**

On Wednesday, Feb. 10 from 6:45 to 8:30 p.m., a community task force interested in preparing for potential Y2K computer problems will hold an organizational meeting at the Robbins Library.

From 6:45 to 7:40 attendees will meet in small groups. At 7:45 p.m., the group as a whole. The town's director of fire services and comptroller are expected to address the gathering.

Pediatric office adds Neighborhood plan

Alewife Brook Community Pediatrics, 29 Massachusetts Ave., now accepts patients of Neighborhood Health Plan.

With a combined pediatric experience of 35 years, ABC provides personalized care for your family in a friendly environment. A physician is available 24 hours

It means world-class care for your husband.

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Family practitioner Dr. Schaeffer joins Maureen Norman, M.D. and Angela Carnes, N.P. as a member of our Symmes Family Practice. Dr. Schaeffer provides care to patients at every stage of life, with special interests in pediatrics and gynecology. A graduate of the University of Iowa, Dr. Schaeffer received his medical degree from the university's College of Medicine. He is certified by the American Board of Family Practice.



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Creative Expressions moves into the Center

Arlington residents may have noticed a new sign in Arlington Center: Creative Expressions Salons.

The salon opened in mid-November on the site of the former Jason's at 477 Massachusetts Ave., and is a full-service hair styling salon for women, men and children. Skin care and nail services are also offered.

Carmen Lombardo, the owner, was quick to spell out why he chose Arlington for his second salon.

"This is such a vibrant community with a great mix of exciting shops and restaurants that attract a large and loyal clientele," he said. "Our downtown location with convenient parking in the municipal lot behind the building is ideal. We hope our salon will be a worthy addition to the Arlington business scene."

Lombardo has a long history of working in the hair styling business. He began in his teens when he worked in a salon, sweeping floors, keeping the work stations neat and the supplies in order. He is a graduate of Wilfred Academy in Boston and gained his early professional experience by working in a local salon. He opened his first salon, Creative Expressions, in Lexington, and recently celebrated its 20th anniversary.

"I had always dreamed of having my own salon where I could focus on and put into practice my vision of what a hair salon should offer — first and foremost, top quality service, as well as the best available products, an experienced staff, and a friendly, welcoming ambiance." Lombardo has carried this philosophy into both of his salons.

Last year the Lexington salon received a Readers Choice Honorary Mention Award in the



Creative Expressions owner Carmen Lombardo

1998 Readership Survey sponsored by Community Newspaper Co.

Lombardo also mentioned his belief in 'team approach.' When asked to explain how he implements this concept in his salons, he said: "If you surround yourself with the best possible associates — those with expert technical skills combined with good 'people skills' — you have the basis for success." Along with that goes his desire to keep up to date on all new developments in his field; he and his staff attend most hairdressers conventions and he encourages his staff to participate in continuing education training as well as in private sessions with top hair designers.

Creative Expressions is looking forward to participating in Arlington community affairs as it has in Lexington. Lombardo says that he is delighted with the welcome he has received in Arlington. He sums up his feelings about his salons with a favorite quote: "Success is not a destination, it is a journey."



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BUSINESS NEWS

Locals promoted at Cambridge Savings

Cambridge Savings Bank, which has three branch offices in Arlington, recently announced these promotions of local residents:

• Charlene Apidianakis of Arlington has been named assistant treasurer at Cambridge Savings Bank. She works in the human resources department as an employment manager.

Apidianakis has worked at Cambridge Savings Bank for 1 1/2 years. She was previously employed as a staffing and employee relations coordinator for American Express. She graduated from Framingham State College with a bachelor of arts degree.

• Anna Casey of Arlington has been named assistant treasurer. She works in the loan production department managing collections. Casey has worked at Cambridge Savings for seven years. Previously she was employed at Bank Five for Savings.

• Martin Yost of Arlington has been appointed assistant treasurer at Cambridge Savings Bank. Yost

manages the bank's Lexington center office. He graduated from Tufts University with a bachelor of arts degree in English.

Computer Cafe offers special discount

During the month of February, The Computer Cafe in Arlington Center will be offering computer rentals at half price to members of the Minuteman Library Network. By presenting their library card, members will be able to use the Internet, check e-mail and type and print resumes for \$4 per hour instead of the regular rental rate of \$8 per hour.

The Computer Cafe also has its own library of the latest computer games which can be played during this special offer to library members only. For those new to the world of computers individual tuition is also available at a nominal fee.

The Computer Cafe offers training courses in the Internet, Windows 95/98 and Word, Excel, Access, HTML and Web Page Design at their location at 449

Mass. Ave. For additional information, call The Computer Cafe at 646-4300.

Cambridge Savings offering scholarships

For the eighth year, Cambridge Savings Bank will award scholarships to graduating high school seniors from Cambridge, Arlington, Bedford, Belmont, Burlington, Lexington and Somerville Public High Schools and Minuteman Science-Technology High School in Lexington. In May 1999, two scholarships will be granted to seniors from each high school; one \$2,000 scholarship will be awarded to a senior attending a four-year college, and a separate \$2,000 scholarship will be awarded to a senior attending a vocational school or community college. One \$2,000 scholarship will also be awarded to a senior at Minuteman Science-Technology High School.

To be eligible for a Cambridge Savings Bank scholarship, students in the designated schools should be planning to attend an

accredited school or college on a full-time basis and have attained at least a B average during their high school years. Involvement in extra-curricular activities, community service and after school work will be considered when selecting winners.

Chamber planning for business Expo

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a business Expo on Sunday, April 25, from 9 to 5 p.m. at Arlington Town Hall.

Tables are available to businesses who are interested in promoting their product or expertise and tables are also available for the distribution and sale of food throughout the day. Six seminars will be presented in the hearing room of Town Hall, all with the idea of helping the business, the business owner and the customer. The cost of a table is \$75 on a first-come-first-served basis. For reservations or more information, call the Chamber office at 643-4600.

Brattle Systems earns Small Business recognition

Brattle Systems Inc. of Arlington has been named New England's Prime Contractor of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The award recognizes the outstanding custom training programs Brattle has developed and delivered to the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, an agency within the Department of Transportation.

"These days, many entrepreneurs want to start the fastest growing company or be the first to go public," said Brattle President Jim Hassett. "I started Brattle with hopes of protecting my initial investment of \$150 and becoming the best training company. Fourteen years later, we've still got the \$150, and this award provides SBA recognition that we are the best."

Brattle Systems has created and implemented custom training programs for thousands of employees for more than 50 organizations, including the Volpe Center, IBM, AT&T, GTE and Bell Atlantic. The company develops and delivers classroom training, computer-based training and other custom programs that increase software productivity and teach new business processes. For more information, visit www.brattlesystems.com.

Hassett attributes Brattle's success to a core group of employees who have remained at the company through its ups and downs: "In the custom training business, the service you get is only as good as the people you work with. We are proud of the fact that our senior managers—John Hughes, Joyce

Westner and myself—have spent 12 years learning how to work together to meet our clients' needs."

"However, the one thing we've never done well at Brattle is sell," said Hassett. "We've never run an ad or rented a booth at a trade show. Until recently, our sales strategy was to answer the phone. During aggressive periods, we would also return calls. We are now starting our first sales campaign to bring Brattle's award-winning quality and cost-consciousness to commercial clients."

Brattle won the New England award because the government client for this contract — the Volpe Center — is located in Cambridge near Brattle's main office in Arlington. The company also has offices in Woodbridge, Va. and

Oklahoma City, Okla. Over the next few months, Brattle will compete with other regional winners as finalists for the award as best in the country.

BRATTLE PRESIDENT JIM HASSETT

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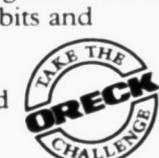
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Decision looms on future of Symmes Hospital

HOSPITAL, FROM PAGE 1

Symmes CEO David Speltz brought Symmes out of bankruptcy to profit-making status. At the time, however, he said the hospital needed to become part of a larger health care facility in order to survive.

In 1995, Lahey and Advantage (now HealthSouth) purchased Symmes for \$4.8 million. Despite concerns at the time that acute care services would be cut, doctors and town officials later said they were pleased with the way the hospital was running.

According to Alison Cohen, spokesperson for the Massachusetts Hospital Association, every hospital in the state is being affected right now by cuts on the federal level. "No organization, whether large or small, is immune from cuts in Medicare, which accounts for \$1.7 billion in Massachusetts over the last five years," she said.

Medicare reimbursements account for an average of 40 percent of hospitals revenue, with some hospitals counting on Medicare reimbursements for as much as 60 percent of revenues, Cohen added.

In addition, she said, the discounts demanded by HMOs in the private sector and President Clinton's announcement just this week of an additional \$2 billion in cuts will have an effect on hospital budgets. "The atmosphere is difficult during this time of huge cuts," she said. "Hospitals are being forced to make tough decisions."

Consumers are understandably concerned about these cuts, Cohen said. "The fact is, we will continue to see the effects of this financial squeeze."

Pamela Bush, media relations manager, said Lahey Clinic is working with members of the Arlington community regarding the future of the hospital. At this time, she said, no decision has been made about closing the hospital.

"I anticipate a decision needs to be made within a month or so," Bush said. "We've been working with the town to find ways to keep



Symmes Hospital sits atop a hill just off Summer Street.

things afloat. We're very concerned about the hospital — it's important to the Arlington community and it's important to us."

Selectman Charles Lyons, however, said Symmes Hospital will definitely not close without strong input from representatives of the Arlington community. In the past year, Lyons said, the Symmes Hospital Task Force, established by Town Meeting in 1998, met with officials of the Lahey Clinic and HealthSouth to discuss the hospital's position. Members of the task force include Lyons, who serves as chairman, as well as Town Counsel John Maher, Town Planner Alan McClenen, Margaret Spangler, Joan Martin and Evelyn Smith DeMille. In the last few months, Maher and Lyons have met with officials on their own.

Currently, Lyons said, Symmes, Lahey and HealthSouth officials are working on a strategic planning process whereby they examine the services they provide and where they offer them.

"I have been given a personal commitment from John Libertino

(the CEO of the Lahey Clinic) that nothing will happen until the strategic planning process is complete and, when that happens, Arlington will have a strong voice in the decision," Lyons said.

Libertino is out of the country this week and could not be reached for comment.

"We've had far-ranging and frank discussions with Lahey and HealthSouth officials about the viability of Symmes and, particularly, acute care services at the hospital which is our main concern," said Maher. "We take these people at their word that no decision will be made without input from the town and we are planning a meeting in the near future with Dr. Libertino to discuss our concerns."

Certainly, Lyons said, the services Symmes Hospital currently provides may have to change. Officials must face dramatic changes, particularly the decision by Congress to limit Medicare and Medicaid growth. Arlington does not want Symmes to lose money but also does not want the community to lose critical services, he

said.

"With a modification of some services, I think we can reach some level of compromise," Lyons said. "All along, I've advocated that critical basic services must still be offered to our citizens (a 24-hour emergency room and acute-care beds with operating room back-up.)"

Corradino confirmed officials are working on options for Symmes with members of the community. "There are many options we are considering, including moving services," she said. "A decision may take several months to make."

Symmes Hospital was the idea of Stephen Symmes, an Arlington resident who left \$35,000 for a community hospital when he died in 1901. Even at its inception, the hospital was plagued by financial difficulties.

Construction on the 10-acre hill site just off Summer Street was completed in 1909, but the hospital did not open until Jan. 1, 1912, after additional money was raised to purchase the necessary medical equipment.

Bohn does more for schools than coordinate volunteers

BOHN, FROM PAGE 1

Not only do teachers learn how to address difficult issues, they also learn how to get the students involved in active conversations. A teacher may ask students to look not only at the history of a particular topic but also at themselves to see how they fit into the picture.

"We had a seventh grader come in this year who spoke Chinese, but very little English," Bohn said. "So I found a tutor who was fluent in Chinese to come in and work with the student."

Finding that tutor who speaks fluent Chinese, Mongolian, or any other language is exactly the kind of task that Bohn is up for every day.

"If someone has a need, they call Judy," said Lamoureux.

Likewise if Bohn is looking for a volunteer she may call you or put an ad in the paper looking for a math tutor volunteer or an expert on Indian culture. Bohn said she usually has between 150 and 200 volunteers a year.

Bohn recently implemented the "Facing History and Ourselves" program, run by a national non-profit foundation based in the Commonwealth. It provides schools with programs, resources and speakers that relate history to issues in the world today. The foundation's curriculum deals with issues of racism, violence, and prejudice.

Bohn, in looking for funding, found that the Human Rights Commission was eager to help. They paid for people from the foundation to come in and train teachers from the Ottoson eighth grade to integrate the curriculum into the school program.

The focus was to make sure that the major issues of history where stereotyping and prejudice were happening were covered in the curriculum," said Bohn.

For example, by tracing the historical roots of the Holocaust and other incidences of collective violence, students learn to make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives.

Not only do teachers learn how to address difficult issues, they also learn how to get the students involved in active conversations. A teacher may ask students to look not only at the history of a particular topic but also at themselves to see how they fit into the picture.

"When you identify and study yourself you begin to learn what influenced your development," said Bohn. "Anybody can teach history, teach the facts, but to examine the message behind the facts and relate it to yourself is the bigger step."

In the English classes foundation trainers work with teachers on choosing a diverse reading list.

"They think about how they can bring out different issues through readings," said Bohn. "For instance they may read a book about Asian Americans rather than reading the traditional books."

Janet Maguire, a special education teacher who runs a transitional learning program at Ottoson, said Bohn was instrumental in helping her get a grant for Project Adventure, a problem-solving program for special needs students which fosters challenging activities that build self esteem.

"It was a difficult grant to get, and she really walked me through it," said Maguire. "She helped me formulate my ideas and saw it through until the very end."

The grant provided a trained staff member from Project Adventure to come into Maguire's classroom once a week for two hours and work with the students.

"She's the type of person you know you can always count on, no matter what," said Maguire of Bohn. "If I have a student that needs special help in a certain area, then Judy will research and find out if there is anyone we can use from the community."

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-CHOICE OF ENTREE-

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boneless breast sautéed golden brown. Topped with fresh asparagus, snowcrab legs and béarnaise sauce.

Swordfish Picatta
fresh native swordfish with white wine, garlic, lemon and whole butter.

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Board to eliminate Choice

CHOICE, FROM PAGE 1

prompts them to speak to their legislators about the current funding formula for Choice. Those students, who come to Minuteman from towns outside the 16-member district, are charged \$5,000 as compared to the \$14,000 that it really costs to educate them at the science and technology school. To make up the difference, member towns pay approximately \$21,000 per student.

"I'm not willing to wait," Pagett said of her vote in opposition to a phase-out plan. "We are no closer to eliminating this destructive base which we build our budget upon than we were three years ago when I joined the committee."

It is fiscally more responsible to phase out Choice, Fitzgerald said. "Choice actions have clearly become a legitimate political issue, but it is critical that School Committee members understand that their actions must be kept in context," he said.

Massive and abrupt fiscal disruption will not allow continued operation of quality service at Minuteman or any other school, Fitzgerald said. "The phase-out plan recognizes timing of cash flow and ensures that any large loss of Choice support does not come a year before any significant increase in non-Choice enrollment," he said.

According to Fitzgerald, Choice revenue occurs in the year the student enrolls at Minuteman, whereas revenue from member towns comes one year after enrollment.

Schlichtman agreed with Pagett that eliminating Choice immediately might give non-member

communities an incentive to pressure their legislators to find a way to get their students into the school or even join the district. "Eliminating Choice right away would put the ball in their court," he said.

Rep. Anne M. Paulsen, D-Belmont, attended the meeting and said she has never been approached by any member of Minuteman's School Committee and asked to increase Choice tuition. "I have never ignored the issue of raising Choice tuition and would love to work with you on addressing that," she said.

In fact, Paulsen said, Rep. James Marzilli, D-Arlington, and Rep. Jay Kaufman, D-Lexington, both of whom also attended the Tuesday meeting, have never opposed raising Choice tuition either. "Who in this room has made a big push in the Legislature for addressing the issue?" she asked.

Rather than placing blame for the way Choice funding is currently calculated, Paulsen recommended committee members devote their energy to showing how good the education is at Minuteman.

"Why not say (to legislators) that the education here is so beneficial for students that people should be willing to pay more than \$5,000 for Choice students?" she proposed.

Budget passes

The committee voted, 13-2 (with one abstention) to accept Fitzgerald's budget of \$13,348,966 for Fiscal Year 2000. The figure represents a 1.7 percent increase — or \$225,140 — over last year's budget.

James Ford, newly elected rep-

resentative for Lancaster, said he couldn't vote on a budget because Tuesday's meeting was his first as a committee member. Schlichtman and Pagett cast the opposing votes.

Several items in the budget disturbed Schlichtman. He said he found it difficult to accept that Minuteman does not charge a user fee for athletics and Choice transportation when Arlington parents, for example, will have to pay \$1,500 for all-day kindergarten programs to make up for money taken out of the town's budget for Minuteman. Moreover, he said, Arlington's warrant for Town Meeting is closed so he cannot insert an article for Town Meeting members to discuss whether or not to have assessment by agreement or by the formula set by Education Reform.

Pagett and Schlichtman were also the only members who opposed approval of the tentative member town assessments. The motion to accept the tentative assessments passed, 13-2 (with Ford abstaining). The superintendent calculated these numbers based on the original regional agreement, but the numbers will likely change when the state sends its own calculations. The wording of the motion allowed a "yes" vote to be applied to any future change in the figures based on state calculations.

"We can lower the assessment without cutting the budget," Schlichtman said. "I'm concerned that we haven't shown flexibility with the fund balance."

The tentative assessment for Arlington in the coming year is \$2.2 million.

Schlichtman's actions scolded, defended

MINUTEMEN, FROM PAGE 1

who act in a subversive manner," she said. "I feel I am not only speaking for the professional staff, I am speaking for the student body, their parents, our business partners and all who have supported us in the past."

There is nothing wrong with disagreeing, Brunaccini said in reference to Arlington representative Paul Schlichtman and his concern with assessment and the budget at Minuteman. "What we're concerned about is the negativity and the way the disagreeing has been done."

There are ways to disagree but not be disagreeable, Brunaccini said. It may not always be fitting to go to the press with concerns about budget deliberations, she said. "Maybe, in certain instances, the more appropriate place to air concerns is in executive session."

Certainly, Brunaccini said, Schlichtman's web site highlights negativity and does not address the good things that are happening at Minuteman.

"Why not balance the site?" she asked. "Why not include some of the good things, at the very least talk about the good work Arlington students are doing at Minuteman?"

The teachers would like to see a cooperative effort from School Committee members, Brunaccini said.

With the help of the School Committee in the past, teachers and administrators built Minuteman into the flagship vocational school in the state, Brunaccini said. "So why are we

having such a problem with district enrollment?" she asked.

What is a rep's role?

Town Moderator John Worden believes the role of a representative to Minuteman Technical High School is to bring a given town's individual views to the table, no matter what they are.

Unlike a community's School Committee which is elected by residents and expected to ultimately represent a single voice, he said, Minuteman is like a legislative body with separate constituencies. Paul Schlichtman, Arlington's member, represents his constituency, Worden said.

He appointed Schlichtman as representative and supports his efforts to work for Arlington's concerns.

"Paul may have a style that bothers members of the committee, but that's too bad," Worden said. "He has very effectively done what apparently no other committee member has done before and that is to question the superintendent when necessary."

Recent attacks on Schlichtman are not the first time he has been criticized for expressing views contrary to the majority of the committee, Worden said. "The committee says other members shouldn't go off on their own or express views contrary to those accepted by the majority," he said. "Well, we have a funny thing called democracy in this country, and that means individual views can be expressed."

The Minuteman School Committee is a multi-town endeavor and it is essential that each representative speak up for their town, even if a particular view is not what other members want to hear, Worden said.

"Without a doubt, the assessment is unfair and Paul is saying the committee has to do something about it," he said. "How well are other committee members representing their towns if they just go along with whatever the superintendent says?"

Teachers support Schlichtman

Judith Ann Phelps, president of the Arlington Education Association and a member of Town Meeting, supports Schlichtman and believes he is effectively and fairly representing the prevailing interests of the town and the members of the teachers' association.

"Our town asked Mr. Schlichtman to take on the very difficult task of attempting fiscal reforms at Minuteman," she said. "I am joined by many members of the community who admire (his) efforts and are appalled by the personal attacks he endures in service to our town."

Phelps is concerned about an erroneous impression people may have that Arlington teachers are not supporting Schlichtman's representation on Minuteman's School Committee. "I wish to make it very clear that teachers in Arlington are not represented by Ms. Brunaccini and Her comments do not reflect our feelings at all," Phelps said.

-By Susan Danseyar

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The Arlington Advocate

COMMENT

The Birthplace
of "Uncle Sam"

Samuel Wilson

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EDITORIAL

Sex Offender Registry
needs to be fixed

The system set up to monitor and track sex offenders is in disarray, tangled in a thicket of debate over fairness, privacy and the right of offenders to be heard. The Legislature passed its own version of Meghan's Law — named for a New Jersey girl who was sexually assaulted and murdered by a convicted sex offender who had been released into a neighborhood without residents knowing it — and now must grapple with fine-tuning it.

Initially, the law mandated that when sex offenders were released from prison, they would be classified level 1, 2 or 3 — with level 3 being the most likely to commit another sex crime. The classifications were made based on more than a dozen factors. The first hurdle for successful implementation of the sex offender registry came when some offenders appealed the classifications, saying that they had been denied due process and their right to appeal. The very act of classifying the relative danger an offender posed placed a stigma on the offenders and their ability to rent an apartment, hold a job or live wherever they wished. Some would argue that's exactly the intent — to ostracize convicted sex offenders, limit their movement in society and, in effect, prevent them from "blending into" a community.

So where does the law stand? Sex offenders must still register with police departments in the communities where they live or work, and residents can still request the names of offenders living within a certain radius of the residents' homes. Beyond that, the confusion over how the law is administered and the registry publicized — or not — has frustrated the press and inhibited local police from spreading the information.

The Legislature is faced with reworking the law, possibly setting up a new agency that could be staffed and trained to handle the hundreds or thousands of classification appeals that would be filed every year, before the level 1, 2 or 3 designation could be applied to an ex-convict. There is no real system right now for holding hearings and fast-tracking the mounting number of appeals.

The new Legislature owes it to concerned citizens — and, yes, to the offenders who have paid their dues — to fix this program and fund it properly. Revamping the law should be number one on the legislative agenda this spring.



There's more to recycling than curbside bins

BY SUSAN WILEY JONES

I want to talk to you about recycling. Yeah, I know what you're thinking. Recycling — we already know all about that, right? We recycle our cans and bottles, our newspapers and junk mail. In the spring and fall, we fill bag after bag of leaves and yard trimmings to put out for collection. Recycling ... aren't we already doing it? What more is there to know?

It's true that many people are familiar with the curbside programs that Arlington offers, and that's great — last year Arlington recycled 29 percent of its waste. We are doing a good job, but we'd like to do even better. The Arlington Recycling Committee, a group of citizens that works with the town to promote recycling, hopes to build on the solid foundations of these existing programs to push our rate even higher. We are also making new efforts to educate the community about aspects of recycling that people may not know so much about. To that end, we are beginning a monthly column to discuss recycling issues that affect our community.

In fact, there is more to recycling than the curbside programs many of us know and love. For example, we'd like to talk about the benefits of home composting.

Composting is the decomposition of yard and kitchen waste to make an excellent soil supplement for houseplants and gardens. Since leaves, yard trimmings, and kitchen waste make up over 30 percent of all household waste, composting is an essential step in reducing the volume of garbage needlessly sent to landfills. Composting is easy and can be done indoors, even in apartment buildings. Last year, the Arlington Recycling Committee and the Department of Public Works sold 123 home composting bins. This year, we plan to sponsor a composting workshop to encourage even more people to learn to compost.

We'd also like to tell you about hazardous waste in your home — what it is, and what you can do to get rid of it. Last year, Arlington

participated as one of the eight charter communities in the Minuteman Household Hazardous Product Facility, a regional site for drop-off of household hazardous products for proper disposal.

This new site operated on nine Saturdays in 1998, and was recognized as the "Best New Program of the Year" by the state Department of Environmental Protection. The new site was definitely a hit with Arlington residents — a total of 812 Arlington cars visited the site, a 35 percent increase from the number of residents who used similar facilities in years past. The Arlington Recycling Committee will provide more information about the site in the coming months.

Finally, we'd like to discuss other issues that go beyond recycling, and include the "reduce" and "reuse" principles that complete the recycling circle. As consumers, the choices we make every day have a big impact on our environment. "Buying recy-

clined" — choosing goods made from recycled materials — creates a market for all of the waste we are putting into recycling bins, and encourages manufacturers to use recycled materials in their products. Buying organic produce and supporting local farmers encourages farming methods that are far more environmentally-friendly than conventional large-scale agriculture. Consuming responsibly, and avoiding products that have excessive packaging, helps to reduce waste. There are even steps you can take to reduce the amount of junk mail that clogs your mailbox every day!

Perhaps there are new things to learn about recycling after all. The Arlington Recycling Committee looks forward to working with you to make Arlington a better, "greener" community. If you would like to get involved or have questions or suggestions, contact Ruth at the DPW at (781) 316-3108. The next Arlington Recycling Committee meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. on February 16, in the Town Annex building, second floor.

In the Loop



LETTERS

Assessors answers
leave more questions

To the Editor:

We want to thank The Advocate for publishing the results of our assessment project. The Assessor's Office response to our study makes the situation even more troubling.

Never, in all our hours of research at the Assessor's Office, or in response to our and other homeowners' questions, was anyone informed, verbally or in writing, that assessment values on 1999 tax bills are 2-3 years out of date. The impression given is exactly the opposite, that they are "constantly updating our data." If we can, using a home computer, working part-time on a volunteer basis, manage to use up-to-date data, why is the Assessor's Office, with a large database, 4 full-time employees, 4 part-time inspectors, and a 3-member Board of Assessors, unable to do better than 2- to 3-year-old data?

The Director of Assessments said, "The [1999] re-assessment of each piece of property in town took into account sales for similar homes in relation to neighborhood, style, size, grade (the quality) and condition." In fact, the 1999 adjustment was only calculated on the land portion of property.

Never, in all our hours of research at the Assessor's Office, or in response to our and other homeowners' questions, was anyone informed that Arlington was divided into six neighborhoods. No map of these divisions was ever discussed or offered. How can a homeowner know whether or not their assessment is comparable to others in their neighborhood if only the Assessor's Office knows which houses are in each neighborhood?



The Banker and Tradesman database shows that 630 properties were sold in 1996. Arlington's report to the state shows 589 sales, of which 524 were considered valid (arms-length). But the Assessor's Office used only "331 homes" to calculate assessments. Why were the other 193 (over 1/3 of sales) eliminated?

Whether or not 2- to 3-year-old data is used, the facts concerning the most expensive houses in the most desired neighborhoods remain: those houses, by and large, are seriously under-assessed. Only 1 of the 42 properties on Kensington Pl and Kensington Rd is assessed above \$400,000. An Academy St house, assessed for \$424,500 in 1995, sold for over \$1 million in 1997, and remains assessed at \$486,600. A Brantwood Rd property, assessed for \$250,400 in 1995, sold for \$430,000 in 1997, and remains assessed at \$278,500. The gap, as described in our study, remains the same — unfair.

No matter what data the Assessor's Office uses to calculate assessments, the figure you end up with on your 1999 individual property bill is supposed to reflect the value of your property, whether your property is

worth \$100,000 or \$500,000. Arlington assessments are clearly flawed. Judge for yourself — see our charts on the Internet at <http://users.rcn.com/practical/assessment>.

The average single-family home in Arlington had a 1998 tax bill of \$3,416. That's a lot of money. We think it only reasonable that the Assessor's Office be accountable for fairly calculating everyone's assessment and clearly explaining how this calculation was done, and we hope to persuade Town Meet-

ing to ensure this.

Darcy C. Devney & Robert M. Kuhn

Owayda decides
against running

To the editor:

I would like to thank those who signed my nomination papers and encouraged me to run in the upcoming election for school committee. Although I did pull papers for a seat on the school committee, after much reflection I have decided not to run at this time. My current commitments will not leave me enough time to devote to this very important and time-consuming endeavor. Special thanks to all the wonderful people at the Stratton school for their support and encouragement.

During the past few weeks, I met and spoke with many fine people which confirms my belief that Arlington is a great place to live and raise a family. It is great that the field of new people interested in town issues is growing and hopefully will continue to expand. Best of luck to all the candidates during their campaigns. Thank you again.

Suzanne Baratta Owayda
Bradley Road

■ SEE LETTERS, PAGE 5

Elections at a glance



Feb. 25 Drawing of candidates' names to determine position on the ballot.

March 6 Last day for voters to register for the town election.

March 27 Town election.

Election Policies:

- The Arlington Advocate will print one formal announcement or position paper from each candidate. The submission should be no more than 600 words and should be accompanied by a color photograph. No announcements will be printed after the March 11 edition.
- Readers are welcome to submit letters, limited to 400 words, that address campaign issues. Letters that merely endorse or denigrate a candidate will not be published. No election letters will be published after the March 18 edition.
- Candidates may submit letters to the editor that address issues raised either by readers' letters or by their opponents. These letters should not be longer than 300 words.

Important Dates:

- Feb. 1** Last day for Town Meeting members to give written notice of re-election plans.
- Feb. 4** Last day for candidates to obtain blank nomination papers.
- Feb. 8** Last day for candidates to file nomination papers for signature certification by the Registrars of Voters.
- Feb. 24** Last day to withdraw or file objections to nomination papers.

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Editorial Fax (781) 674-7735

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Editor (781) 674-7726
e-mail: Tom.Rose@cnc.com

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It is the goal of The Arlington Advocate to provide our readers with the highest quality local coverage they desire and need, in a newspaper that is accurate, timely and filled with an intimate and lively portrait of the community in which they live, work and play.

Y2K: The time to prepare is now

BY CAROL BAROUDI

I'm Carol Baroudi, co-author of "The Internet For Dummies." I've been working with computers for nearly 30 years. About a year ago, I embarked on a book project investigating the computer problem known as Y2K — the problem found in many computer programs and microchips that will cause many systems to fail on Jan. 1 of the year 2000 because these programs and processors will interpret the date as Jan. 1, 1900.

People were making quite a fuss and I wanted to see for myself what all the hoopla was about. Was the problem being sensationalized?

I found that we have a big problem on our hands. The technical problems themselves are fairly trivial. However, these problems exist in too many places to fix in the time we have left. Whether or not we've even touched a computer in our whole lives, we are all highly dependent on integrated computer systems that deliver everything from electricity, to food, water, and telephone service.

The issue I want to address is not the problem of fixing the computer systems — though they do need fixing. My concern is that we all understand the problem sufficiently so that we can develop contingency plans. Should anything happen, it will be our preparedness that will mean the difference between coming through this together or possible personal tragedy.

So why should you care? The scenario that concerns me most is the loss of power for an extended period of time. To understand why we are vulnerable here we need to understand the interconnectedness of all the systems on which we depend for our daily living. We are part of a national power grid that extends into Canada. Individual power generating plants are hooked together into one system allowing us to use electricity more efficiently.

We use alternating current. For the grid to operate, the generating plants have to be synchronized. A

failure in one point of the grid, in one power plant, can ripple through the entire grid, causing more power failures. Now ultimately we will be able to repair the grid and things will be operational again and our lives can go back to how they are, more or less. How long that repair will take is completely unknown. It could be a matter of hours, days, weeks or months.

So, if we buy candles and wood stoves and wait for the power to come back on, is that enough? Not quite. We are not in the least self-sufficient. The water we use is pumped to us by electricity. The food we eat is trucked to us; trucks use fuel that is pumped electrical. Without electricity for even a couple of days, life as we know it changes profoundly.

Now, Y2K is not the only thing that could bring down the power, and for the most part we live our lives not worrying about these scenarios. However, this time we have fair warning — some amount of disruption is likely.

The Y2K Arlington Committee invites you to join us in working together so that should anything happen, we'll all know what to do,

where to go, we'll have sufficient food and water for everyone, and we'll know how we'll handle emergency situations. We pray we will have no need to ever use our contingency plans, but we are convinced we need to have them.

We are some 42,000 residents in Arlington alone. To feed us for a month requires over 1000 tons of food. We need water for consumption and sanitation. We need to keep warm.

So what do we do? To prepare appropriately can be costly and time-consuming. If something does happen and we prepare only as individuals, those few who are prepared will be at the mercy of those who haven't. We need to work together — prepared neighbors make a prepared community.

The few of us who have begun this enormous project are, quite frankly, in need of a lot of help from a lot of people. Other communities have begun to prepare, but we need to develop a plan for

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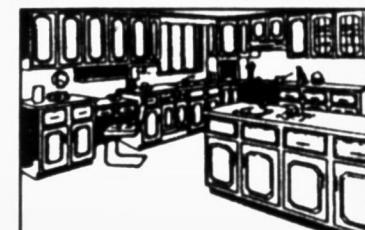
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Arlington. You can read about down-to-earth, practical, reasoned plans in the Utne Reader's Y2K Citizen's Action Guide (available in some bookstores and newsstands or on the Web at www.utne.com).

On Wednesday, Feb. 10 we'll have an educational and organizational meeting at Robbins Library from 6:45 to 8:30 p.m. Please come and ask your neighbors to come.

From 6:45 to 7:40 p.m. we'll meet in small groups — we'll have an orientation for people to learn about Y2K and ask questions, and we'll have action group meetings to organize what needs to be done in various areas. At 7:45 p.m. we'll come together as a whole group to learn what's happening locally, on the state level, nationally and globally. We will have speakers from the town, including the Fire Chief and Town Comptroller, and the opportunity to raise issues in the large group.

If you understand the situation, we need your support. If you don't yet understand it, please come and ask your questions.

If you'd like to begin to help immediately, join any of the existing action groups.

For neighborhood preparedness (organizing by smaller neighborhoods within Arlington), contact Elizabeth Mahon at 641-1668. For utilities and services, call Sandy Vorce at 648-6725 or send e-mail to Svorce2000@aol.com. For health and safety, call Jeff Levetin at 641-4392. For public education and media, call Carol Baroudi at 617-747-4045 or send e-mail to carole@baroudi.com.

For general information or to get on the mailing list, call Christopher Mogil at 648-0776 or send e-mail to mtmnews@aol.com.

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■ LETTERS, FROM PAGE 8

LaMachia would build consensus on board

To the editor:

These are exciting times for Arlington's public schools. The town should be proud of its commitment to improve school buildings for our children. Arlington is attracting new families who see that this is a community that values education. I also commend *The Advocate* for increasing coverage of school-related issues.

But new buildings and better communication are only part of the challenges Arlington's schools face. Recent MCAS scores showed the system's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the new statewide curriculum standards, and more MCAS challenges lie ahead. The test will soon score elementary-school children on their knowledge of another language and culture. Except for sixth graders at the middle school, Arlington's younger students risk falling behind, because no language program for them exists.

Changing U.S. demographics and the new global economy make communicating in a second language a critical skill, not a trill. As a parent new to Arlington's schools, I have been gratified to see what a team of parents and school officials can accomplish in tackling this prob-

LETTERS

lem. This fall we began an after-school Spanish program, based on the state's curriculum framework, at the combined Brackett-Stratton school. We developed a survey to ask which languages parents would like their children to learn, and we have begun to apply for grants. The school department has welcomed our ideas and is working to put this issue on the radar screen of parents and teachers.

I have worked with many outstanding people on this project. Having the assistance of those knowledgeable in the field has been especially valuable. Joani LaMachia, member of the Brackett School Council and a Brackett parent, led the way in finding the state and local school administrators and teachers able to help us.

I am thrilled that Joani is now running for School Committee. The School Committee's support will be critical to the success of the language program and other initiatives to improve our schools. Joani is that rare person who can focus on the big picture while working hard on nitty-gritty details that move a project forward. She has the consensus-building and problem-solving skills that School Committee members must have if Arlington's schools are to add elementary language programs and to continue on their trajectory toward excellence. I hope you will join me in voting for her.

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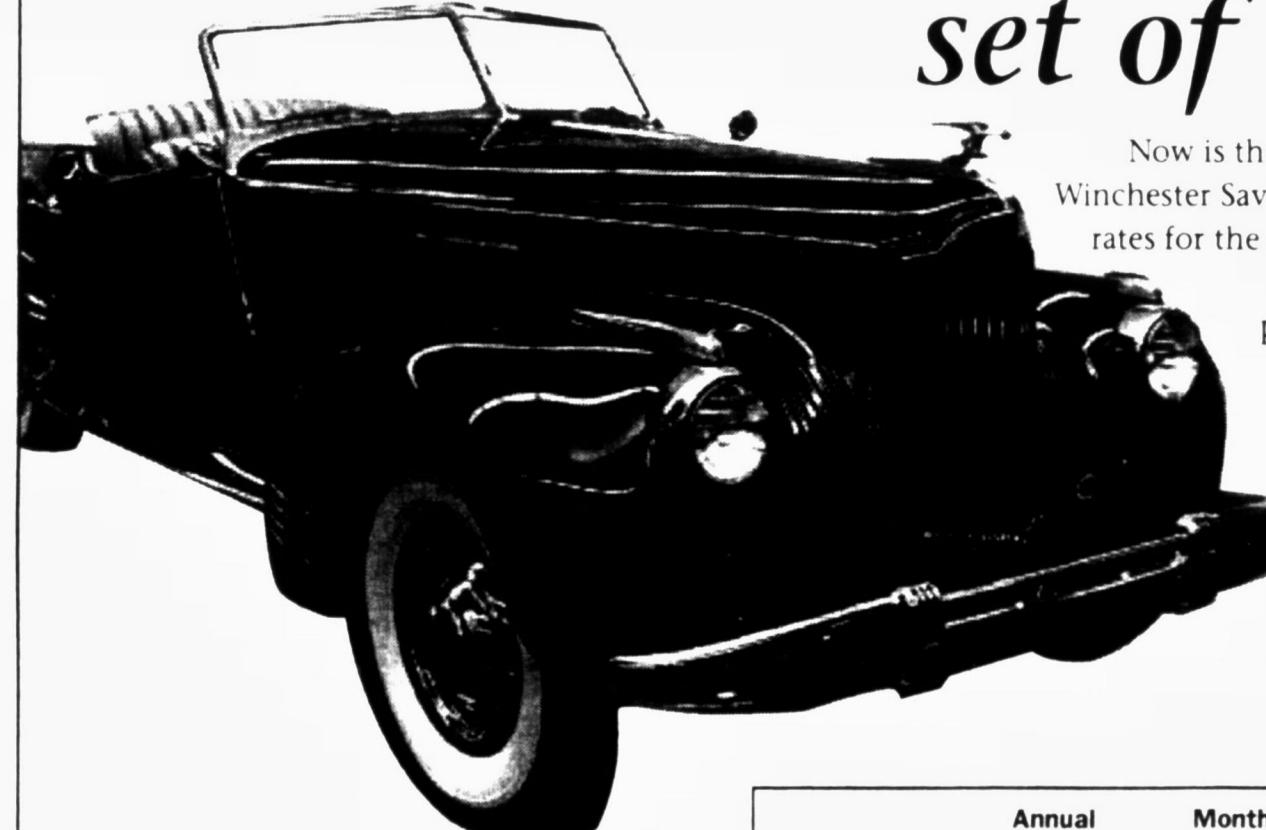
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Board recommends Antonelli's ouster as Registrar of Probate

BY AMY JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

The committee that investigated misconduct complaints against Middlesex Register of Probate Robert Antonelli has recommended he be removed from office.

In a four-page written decision, the Committee on Professional Conduct for Clerks of Courts recommended Antonelli be ousted from his \$82,500-per-year county job, agreeing with the recommendation of the hearing officer who presided over a misconduct hearing held in September.

"Mr. Antonelli has been unable or unwilling to recognize or appreciate the implications of his conduct or the seriousness of the charges against him," the committee's report to the Supreme Judicial Court stated.

Antonelli took office in January 1997, but was suspended with pay that October after the Committee on Professional Conduct for Clerks of Courts accused him of failing to be impartial in his duties as Register of Probate, demeaning and insulting his employees to the point that it affected the administration of justice within the court and conducting himself in a manner that impeded communications within the court.

In its report on Friday, the committee said it "has seen no affirmative sign that, if Mr. Antonelli were restored to his position, he would be able to conduct himself appropriately."

Despite the recommendation, Antonelli said he plans to run for re-election to the office of Register of Probate.

The committee issued its report to the full Supreme Judicial Court Jan. 29. The court has taken the matter under advisement, according to spokeswoman Liz Sullivan. The justices will now decide whether to remove Antonelli from office, Sullivan said.

Antonelli, who once lived in Woburn, is now a Somerville resident.

Antonelli said he received a copy of the committee's report from a newspaper, not from the committee or his own lawyer.

"We're talking about professional responsibility here, I don't think that's too professional to release it to the media and not give me a copy," he said.

With regard to the recommendation he lose his job, Antonelli said it is addressed in the 36 pages of objections he and his lawyer filed with the committee at a Jan. 8 hearing. Antonelli also said that the testimony in the hearing officer's report was distorted and untrue.

Antonelli's objections, filed by his attorney, Peter Gubellini, claim the state SJC has no power to remove an elected official from office or call for proceedings to do so. Gubellini claims that the proceedings violate the separation of powers doctrine.

Antonelli "argues that given this fact, the only proper method for removing an elected official, given the inherent conflict in having the Supreme Judicial Court determine its own authority, is through the impeachment process in the Massachusetts Legislature," according to the objections Antonelli filed Jan. 8.

The objections also stated the testimony of the Probate Court employees cannot be used against him because the employees did not follow the grievance procedure established in their collective bargaining agreement and that the hearing officer and the lawyer for the committee were biased because they were former Probate Court justices.

The findings of Charles Bowser, the hearing officer who presided over Antonelli's September misconduct hearing at Suffolk Superior Court, became public with the committee's recommendations.

"What emerged through the tri-

al testimony was the portrait of a man whose background, training, experience and education did not prepare him to assume the responsibilities of Register of Probate," Bowser said in his findings.

"Mr. Antonelli continuously used his position for his own purposes and gave little thought to the inappropriateness of his actions. His concerns about employee loyalty and his distrust of employees bordered on the paranoid."

"Mr. Antonelli maintained a hostile, belittling and angry attitude toward the courthouse staff, which led to an unproductive and unprofessional atmosphere," Bowser said.

The September hearing was held as part of the committee's formal disciplinary process, giving each side a chance to present testimony about the allegations.

Bowser found that Antonelli's testimony was "disingenuous" and that Robert Antonelli testified in an "inconsistent manner."

"Mr. Antonelli's central theme in his defense was that the courthouse personnel was biased against him, disloyal (because they maintained loyalty towards his predecessor), and distrustful of his attempts to improve the ... court. He also contends that he is a victim of Middlesex County politics," Bowser said in his findings.

With regard to the committee's first allegation of "failure to give the appearance of impartiality," Bowser found believable the stories of witnesses who testified against Antonelli about his conduct and threats.

Bowser found Antonelli's actions amounted to willful misconduct that brought his office into disrepute.

"That he did not follow through with the threats he made is of no consequence and is not an issue. That he threatened to use the power of his office for his own personal gain ... and gave members of the public the impression

that he was able to influence the outcome of his case and their employment status is sufficient," Bowser said in his findings.

The facts Bowser found to be true, based on the testimony at the hearing, included that Antonelli threatened a local attorney that he would never "get anything done in that Probate Court" if Antonelli was elected as Register of Probate, asked a court employee to look up the license plate number for the age of a "gorgeous blonde" he saw driving a car next to his, and asked a court employee to look up the criminal record of another court employee.

Bowser also found Antonelli threatened to fire the Melrose police officers who were trying to resolve a domestic situation at his girlfriend's house — which ultimately resulted in a restraining order against him by his girlfriend.

During the dispute with the officers, Antonelli told them he would call newspapers and he also identified politicians with whom he claimed to have a close relationship, Bowser's findings stated.

Bowser also found Antonelli tried to retaliate against his girlfriend by trying to intervene in her divorce proceedings. It was later discovered Antonelli was keeping his girlfriend's divorce file in his office, Bowser found.

He also found that Antonelli and his father, Rocco J. Antonelli Sr., asked Probate Judge Sheila McGovern how many jobs he would be allowed to fill in the Probate Court when he took office.

Bowser also found evidence to support the committee's second allegation, that Robert Antonelli "acted in an undignified, discourteous and unprofessional manner towards members of his staff, judges, administrators and others."

Bowser's findings outlined numerous situations in which Antonelli yelled at, used foul lan-

guage toward, ridiculed, demeaned or belittled a variety of employees.

Bowser found Antonelli ridiculed the appearance of some employees, but he did not find that was a pattern of conduct. Bowser did not find Antonelli failed to cooperate with the administrative office of the courts and with the staff of the Probate Court, as the committee alleged in a third allegation.

"There are many mistruths and distortions in the testimony," Antonelli said of the September proceedings. "I feel that there hasn't been any justice up until this point and I'm hoping that justice will be served before the full Supreme Court."

"As a person who works for the court, I believe in the justice system one hundred percent. I do believe justice will prevail," Antonelli said.

He said there are still questions he would like answered about the original allegations of misconduct. Antonelli said one of the allegations claimed he used his office to help his friends.

"They were never subpoenaed to the hearing and they were never mentioned by name," he said. "I would like to know who these [people] are and I'll be happy to answer the allegations."

During the hearing and in the objections Antonelli filed in January, he claimed he did not do many of the things his employees and others accused him of doing, and that actions at the time and statements during the hearing were taken out of context or misunderstood.

Many of the objections are supported by Antonelli's claims during his hearing testimony, which conflict directly with the stories of the witnesses, according to Gubellini.

"The rest of the incidents referred to by the Hearing Officer amount to junior high school," he said. "She said' arguments. Unfortunately, this case contains far too many of these," Gubellini said in the objections.

Lot is cause for concern

■ LOT, FROM PAGE 1

done without the permit and I'm appealing to the board that they not grant the variance," she said.

In addition, Conroy said she is concerned for the character of the neighborhood. With the additional parking spaces, she said neighbors worry about increased traffic in an already congested area.

The property owner could not be reached for comment. She owns property at 202-218 Massachusetts Ave., which has no parking, and wants to allow tenants to park at the 5-7 address, said town Director of Planning and Community Development Alan McClenen.

The parking lot, however, has already been created. The paving at 5-7 Freeman Street looks quite recent and was not in the assessor's office photographs taken in 1996, according to McClenen. Prior to the paving, he said, the property conformed to the zoning requirement to provide 1,014 square feet of usable open space. Now, however, the paving covers the open space in the rear yard and the grass area in the front does not meet the area requirement or the 25-foot minimum dimension specified in the definition of "usable open space" as it is approximately 690 square feet in area.

Currently, McClenen said, a parking area with more than five spaces must conform to zoning provisions. Several spaces at 5-7 Freeman Street do not have the required aisle space and are not set back 10 feet from property lines.

If the usable open space is restored to the property, he predicts some additional parking spaces may be legally constructed. If a special permit is granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals, he said the spaces could be used for residential use at 202-218 Massachusetts Avenue.

According to Mary Winstanley O'Connor, chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals, the original hearing scheduled for Jan. 29 was postponed until the Feb. 23 meeting because the Board had to re-advertise the variance under different zoning laws.

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